

Interview with Dolores Huerta  
Stockton, California  
September 28, 1957

The Stockton CSO has a committee which is devoted to the problem of farm labor, or perhaps I should say problems of farm labor. One of the things that we are doing Lomie Gonzales has already told you about, we are trying to do something for the braceros; trying to help them out when they have complaints and they come to our attention. We've had a lot of difficulty with this kind of work and it is very frustrating because many times we have found the man was shipped out before we could do anything for him; whether they shipped him out because he complained or whether his contract had really expired, I can't say for sure. In the future, Dr. Galarza, recommends that when we have evidence of some legitimate grievance, that we should phone Mr. AlN Norton in San Francisco and he can issue an order freezing the man on the job until there is an investigation even if his contract does run out.

Another activity of our committee at the present time is conducting a census of domestic workers in this area who are engaged in farm labor or are interested in doing this kind of work. This is a project that we are doing with Dr. Galarza, he sent us some forms which ask, "How far would you be willing to travel to a farm job?", "How much would you be willing to work for?," and things like that. Incidentally, we are finding that many of our answers are not along the same lines, it seems that most of these people are willing to travel up to 40 or 50 miles and most of them consider around \$1.25 an hour to be a fair wage. The reason that we are doing this census is that we want to find out if it is true what the Farm Placement Service claims; it claims that it has to bring in thousands and thousands of braceros because there are no domestic workers



available. Well, we have ahunch that this is not true. Many domestic workers are accustomed to coming into the Stockton area at this time of the year and we have seen them coming in this year, only this year they are told that the jobs are already filled; so they are just piling up. We think we can prove that there is a sizable pool of workers that the Farm Placement people don't know about, or have deliberately shut their eyes to.

Dr. Galarza conducted this same sort of sruvey up in Sutter and Yuba counties last month, he fouhd over 1,000 domestics who had come into the area expecting to find work picking peaches but who were unemployed at the very peak of the peach season. He found 40 families, I believe it was, who were sleeping under a bridge as they had no money and no place else to live. Well, Dr. Galarza told Mr. Hayes about ~~it~~ what he had found, Mr. Hayes went up there and conducted a so-called investigation according to Galarza Hayes talked to only seven or eight people. Well, after that Hayes came back to his office in Sacramento and ~~se~~ said to Galarza, "You're a liar." Galarza got mad~~e~~, he told the newspapers the full story, the San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner both gave p~~ir~~etty good coverage. Galarza demanded a conference with Governor Knight to ~~see~~ who was really the liar, but Knight refused; and by the time things had gone this far, the peach picking season was~~x~~ pretty well over so ~~hx~~ I guess nothing further came of it. What we want to do now is to conduct these censuses in advance of the season so we'll be able to do something for the domestics before it is too late.

Speaking of displacement by braceros, I understand that braceros are now displacing other braceros. Tracy I am told has 10,000 nationals right at this moment, which is twice as many as last year; I don't know



why they brough in so many, but there they are and the men are really complaining because there is not enough work to go around.

I don't know too much about the health of the braceros but, there is one thing that I have been told that may interest you; one of the members of our committee has a brother-in-law who manages a bracero camp, he says that the men working for him when they are given baloney sandwiches for lunch, usually throw the baloney away and eat only the bread. The standard practice is for them to get two sandwiches for lunch, so this means that their lunch only consists of four slices of bread, it isn't much of a lunch when you consider how hard these men have been working.

A girl friend of mine works as a receptionist and nurse for Dr. Moore who is an osteopath here in town. He has arrangements with several of the bracerox camps around Stockton when the men get sick they are brought into his office; what he actually has is two offices, his old office which is kind of small and shabby and a new office which has been built alongside of it. The old office is where he takes care of the nationals, the new office is for local people only they don't use the same waiting room or anything. My girl friend has to keep the records for the nationals and get a description of their symptoms and give them directions for taking medicine and so forth and so on, because the doctor doesn't speak any Spanish. Almost anytime of the day that you go by Dr. Moore's place you can see several braceros sitting on the curb outside, this is because there isn't room for all of them to wait inside, and because the doctor has to take care of his regular patients who have appointments first; sometimes those poor nationals have to wait almost all day.

My girl friend has never mentioned to me whether or not the nationals come in complaining of folk illnesses; some of these folk illnesses I have heard of and others I have not. "Mal de ojo", for example, I have



~~hexed~~  
heard of, this is something that happens to babies if someone stares at them for a long time. If you can't avoid looking at a baby for a long time, the thing to do is to make the sign of the cross on its forehead; other people say that you should spit in its mouth; some other people say that you should put an egg under the bed where the baby sleeps at night, the next morning you break the egg open and if it has a spot on it that is the hex which has left the baby and entered the egg. Some people, like my mother, swear that this is true; other people say that it is only superstition; I myself am not quite sure, I don't know, there may be something in it.